

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**A NEWER WORLD ORDER - THE RETURN TO A MULTIPOLAR ERA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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In 1991, the international system's Bipolar Era and its balance of terror standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union ended peacefully and not as the result of a cataclysmic war. The Soviets and their allies eventually succumbed to the economic burdens of competing in an arms race with the West for nuclear superiority. When the dust cleared, the Soviet Union disintegrated into sixteen independent nations and the iron curtain over Eastern Europe disappeared. For the last fifteen years, the United States has dominated a new world order as a unipolar power. This research paper will provide a history of the international system and will chronicle its evolution over the last 200 years, to include the multipolar, bipolar, and unipolar eras. It will examine the dynamics and permanence of today's unipolar international system. Finally, this study will examine four distinct foreign policy (grand) strategies that the US could choose to implement (isolationism, liberal internationalism, realism and democratic globalism) and will further consider how that decision might affect US primacy on the world stage and help create a Newer (multipolar) World Order.



## A NEWER WORLD ORDER - THE RETURN TO A MULTIPOLAR ERA

In 1991, the international system's Bipolar Era and its balance of terror standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union ended peacefully and not as the result of a cataclysmic war. The Soviets and their allies eventually succumbed to the economic burdens of competing in an arms race with the West for nuclear superiority. When the dust cleared, the Soviet Union disintegrated into sixteen independent nations and the iron curtain they threw over Eastern Europe disappeared. For the last fifteen years, the United States has dominated a new world order as a unipolar power. Political scientists, system theorists, and military leaders from nation-states in all corners of the globe are currently analyzing whether or not this US led international system will last much longer. If it changes, what will take its place, another unipolar system, a bipolar system, or perhaps, a multipolar system?

The answer requires an analysis of the international system and its evolution over the last 200 years (to include previous polar power constellations) and an examination of the dynamics and permanence of today's unipolar international system. This study will examine four distinct foreign policy (grand) strategies that the US could choose to implement (isolationism, liberal internationalism, realism and democratic globalism)<sup>1</sup> and will further consider how that decision might affect US primacy on the world stage. The analysis that follows suggests that a multipolar world, albeit one still dominated by the United States, will eventually replace the current unipolar system.

### The Westphalian International System and the Congress of Vienna

Nation-states are political organizations responsible for maintaining and sustaining community life. People historically expect their nation-state to provide them with security and certain inalienable rights such as life, liberty, and property. Citizens also expect their leaders to protect them from threats emanating from outside their borders. The origins of the modern international system can be traced back to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Consequently, the international system is comprised of sovereign nation-states, not tribes, clans, city-states, or empires. As a result, each nation-state had to understand not only its own internal security issues, but also the dynamic relationship established between the components of the international system and the delicate balance of power maintained by hundreds of sovereign national entities.

James Roberts and Alan Rosenblatt contend that international political systems are normally characterized by the number of system poles (polar powers) present at any given time. "A system pole, like a magnetic pole, is a nation-state with enough influence to attract or repel

the interests of other nation-states in a way that effects the entire (international) system.”<sup>2</sup> For example, during the Cold War Era (1946-1990), the international system was bipolar and its two poles were the United States and the Soviet Union. Both of these world powers had enough influence and power to attract and repel smaller nations.

### The Multipolar Era

The Treaty of Westphalia effectively ended the Thirty Years’ War that had ravaged the European continent. Its adoption resulted in the end of feudalism and the beginning of a new political system based on national self-determination and sovereignty.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, these historic changes initially created a world order that was, in effect, an unmanaged, multipolar constellation (a system with more than two poles). Kenneth Waltz believes that such an international system is by nature, decentralized and anarchic. “In the absence of agents with any system-wide authority, formal relations of super- and subordination fail to develop.”<sup>4</sup> In this type of system, a small number of major powers competed for dominance in international relations. What evolved was a very fluid arrangement where skilled ambassadors negotiated to balance or rebalance the system and thereby sustain stability.

Following its turbulent revolution, a preponderant France, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, constituted the first real threat to the international order established at Westphalia. After two decades of conflict, the Allies finally defeated the French armies at Waterloo. According to Jeremy Smoler, “Europe was in great disorder after the defeat of Napoleon in 1814. The major powers responsible for his defeat, Austria, Great Britain, Russia, and Prussia signed the Treaty of Chaumont agreeing to meet in Vienna, Austria in September to put Europe back in order.”<sup>5</sup> Henry Kissinger explains that while other European nations attended the conference, these four polar powers (the Quadruple Alliance) decided to handle the important issues themselves:

While Napoleon was enduring his first exile at Elba, the victors of the Napoleonic Wars assembled at Vienna, Austria in 1814 to plan the postwar world. The Congress of Vienna continued to meet all during Napoleon’s escape from Elba and his final defeat at Waterloo. In the meantime, the need to rebuild the international order had become even more urgent.<sup>6</sup>

Each of the four major powers sent negotiators to the conference. Austria sent Prince von Metternich to represent the Emperor, while the King of Prussia sent Prince von Hardenburg as his representative. Tsar Alexander I of Russia decided to personally travel to Vienna and attend the conference. Meanwhile, Great Britain sent both its Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh and its brilliant military commander Wellington. Eventually, the four major powers even permitted

the French to send a representative to the conference (making it the Quintuple Alliance) and the newly restored King of France, Louis XVIII, sent Talleyrand.<sup>7</sup>

On the surface, it appeared as if the Old European system had triumphed over Revolutionary France, but the balance of power was not really the same as it was in 1789. Certain modifications, introduced by Napoleon, were irrevocable. Nation-states that developed centralized governments, instituted the Code Napoleon, and abolished feudalism, kept these modifications. In other nations, the emergence of a strong middle class would lead to the decline in power of both the nobility and the clergy.<sup>8</sup> Metternich believed that his redrawn map of Europe would last for an eternity. Like Napoleon, he and his followers failed to grasp just how strong the nationalistic fervor was all across Europe. Robert Libbon believes that, "As much as Metternich and his pals wanted to pretend otherwise, it was impossible to stuff the revolutionary genie back into its bottle."<sup>9</sup>

The post-Napoleonic Multipolar Era consisted of two distinct periods. The first of these periods is more commonly known as the Concert of Europe, a balance of power arrangement that dominated European international relations for nearly forty years. This era began immediately following the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815. Henry Kissinger explains that the multipolar system worked because the Continental countries came together due to a shared value system. "This was not only a physical equilibrium, but a moral one. Power and justice were in substantial harmony. The balance of power reduced the opportunities for using force; a shared sense of justice reduced the desire to use force."<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, peace in Europe would only last until the middle of the nineteenth century. According to Maria Fogel, "The outbreak of the Crimean War signified the downfall of the Concert of Europe because it was the first major armed conflict in Europe after the settlement reached at the Congress of Vienna."<sup>11</sup> While this was certainly not the first instance of violence in Europe following the conference, it was the first time that the major powers fought each other. They did so over competing national interests, not in an effort to sustain the balance of power. Following the Crimean War, the international system would continue to become more unstable because, more times than not, countries would choose to fight for their national interests instead of maintaining the peace.

The second Multipolar Era was much more turbulent than the first. It was a time dominated by conflict, nationalism, and mobilization, which began on the eve of the Crimean War and ended with the culmination of World War I. For the next twenty years, France's Napoleon III and Prussia's Otto von Bismarck dominated the European geopolitical scene. Neither of these leaders wanted to reestablish the pre-Crimean War balance of power. Henry

Kissinger explains that Napoleon III personally hated the Congress of Vienna because its purpose was to contain France, whereas he wanted to expand his empire. Likewise, Bismarck was equally unhappy with the pre-war balance of power arrangement because "it locked Prussia into being Austria's junior partner in a German Confederation."<sup>12</sup> It also prevented him from unifying Germany because it protected many tiny, defenseless principalities from being absorbed into a Prussian-led German nation. Both men advocated the "Realpolitik" approach to international relations.<sup>13</sup> They believed that a nation's foreign policy should reflect power calculations and national interest, not some unrealistic notion of system stability. Prince Swarzenburg of Austria accurately summed up this shift in diplomatic ideology when he pointed out that "the days of principles are gone."<sup>14</sup> No longer shackled by the Congress of Vienna, from this point on, foreign policy would be a contest of strength and the mighty would prevail.

Realpolitik forced Western European powers to join elaborate alliance systems, by which the states sought military support in anticipation of war. This new dynamic replaced the balance of power system as the preferred means to guarantee peace on the continent. Unfortunately, ever shifting loyalties and secret alliances would do nothing but weaken system stability. Although a multipolar system would exist until the culmination of World War I, most of the major powers now relied on one of two alliance systems, the Triple Alliance or the Triple Entente, to provide security. While this did not immediately turn the international system into a true bipolar constellation, it further agitated an already precarious balance of power in the region. As Thomas Christensen warns, in multipolar systems, great powers may tie themselves too tightly to a group of allies and small conflicts can quickly turn into cataclysmic world wars.<sup>15</sup> The international system's delicate balance of power would be threatened at the end of the century when three new major powers, a unified Italy, Japan, and the United States joined the already crowded upper-tier of nation-states. The addition of these new polar powers created more friction and instability in the international system. In fact, each of these nations would participate in a major power war by 1920.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe was a powder keg waiting to explode. All it would take was a small spark and the entire continent would be at war. The Balkans, as usual, provided such an event. Soon after a Serbian terrorist assassinated Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Russia ordered full mobilization. On July 28, 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia although they would not be able to complete their mobilization plan for another two weeks. Within five days, Germany declared war on France and Great Britain, who subsequently declared war on Germany.<sup>16</sup> Henry Kissinger concludes that, "The great powers had succeeded in turning a secondary Balkan crisis into a world war. A dispute over Bosnia

and Serbia had led to the invasion of Belgium, at the other end of the continent, which in turn made Great Britain's entry into the war inevitable.<sup>17</sup>

The antiquated Congress System failed because Europe's leaders opted to join alliances, consolidate power, and fight an apocalyptic war rather than sit down and resolve their disputes. Kissinger sadly points out that the European Congress system, which throughout the nineteenth century had provided a cooling off period or led to an actual solution, was not even attempted. "By the time events had run their course, 20 million lay dead, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had disappeared, and three of the four dynasties which entered the war – the German, the Austrian, and the Russian, were overthrown."<sup>18</sup> Only the British royal family survived the war and most of their power was only ceremonial by this juncture. Millions of Europeans needlessly died because their political leaders were unable and unwilling to maintain peace within the international system. Subsequently, diplomats discarded the multipolar balance of power system and to this day, it has not resurfaced.

Some scholars believe that multipolar systems are inherently unstable. In their view, secret alliances and ever shifting loyalties made Europe an extremely dangerous place from 1816 to 1919. Multipolar systems can even cause misperceptions about the international system's distribution of capabilities and therefore results in alliances that balance of power systems cannot explain.<sup>19</sup> When great powers tie themselves too tightly to a group of allies, small conflicts can turn into world wars. The unstable multipolar balance of power system in pre-WW I Europe eventually caused the major powers to form two rigid alliances that overreacted, mobilized, and plunged into a war that was avoidable. John Mearshimer believes that in contemporary times, a new multipolar world could cause another "war of all against all".<sup>20</sup>

Conversely, Karl Deutsch and J. David Singer defend the multipolar system and believe it to be the most stable arrangement for the world's anarchic nation-states. Their studies quantifiably demonstrate what many historians previously accepted based on reason and intuition alone, that more poles can actually diffuse instability in the system. Their theory simply states that alliances and diplomacy will result in positive interactions that reduce friction.<sup>21</sup> Despite their optimism, not many other scholars desire a return to a multipolar world.

Sandwiched around negotiations held twenty-six years apart at Versailles and Potsdam, world leaders attempted various ways to restore and then maintain stability in the international system. When peaceful attempts like the League of Nations and Appeasement failed to provide system stability, a new set of leaders, like their predecessors, entered into an intricate system of entangling alliances that again divided the great powers into two coalitions. Unfortunately, they also chose to go to war to obtain the favorable balance of power they coveted. By the time the

victorious Allied Powers began rebuilding the world after the carnage of the Second World War, the international system was no longer configured in a multipolar constellation, but completed its transition to a bipolar system.

### The Bipolar Era

At the end of World War II, the Allies attempted to establish a world order based upon democratic governments, multilateral organizations, and global economic prosperity. Instead of mandating that the defeated Axis powers pay reparations, the Allies rebuilt their defeated enemies' economies and established democratic governmental systems. The victorious powers established the United Nations (UN) to provide a global association of governments that would facilitate cooperation in international law, security, economic development, and social equity.<sup>22</sup> Later, at a conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in 1946, the International Monetary Fund and the precursor to the World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, were formally established.

Unfortunately, by 1947, the reluctance of the Soviet Union to recall its forces from the Eastern European countries it occupied indicated a post-war foreign policy that mirrored the declared ideological expansionist claims of the Communist Party. In response to the Soviets, the United States attempted to preserve the status quo and provided economic assistance to European countries attempting to rebuild their economies. The policy of containment, originally espoused and made popular by political theorist and diplomat George F. Kennan Jr., became the strategy the United States opted to use to limit Soviet expansionism. Kennan believed the "adroit and vigilant application of counterforce"<sup>23</sup> could contain the Soviets. Therefore, the United States and her allies should use its economic, military, and political resources to stop the spread of communism.

The world's two remaining superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, were creating a new international order dominated by two very rigid alliance systems, with very little diplomatic maneuvering room between them, facing off against each other all over the world. This changed world order would require new strategic approaches and both sides scrambled to consolidate their respective spheres of influence. America articulated its official Cold War strategy in a 1950 National Security Document (NSC-68),<sup>24</sup> which stated that the defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere. Henry Kissinger explains that the United States took the opportunity to seize the moral high ground on the international stage:

Once vital interests had been equated with moral principle, America's strategic objectives were cast in terms of worthiness rather than of power. In these terms the purpose of the Cold War strategy was the conversion of the adversary, which

in turn can be defined as Soviet acceptance of their specific and limited conditions requisite to an international environment in which free institutions can flourish, and in which the Russian peoples will have a new chance to work out their own destiny.<sup>25</sup>

The Soviets, on the other hand, wanted to expand their communist revolution anywhere and everywhere. Stalin wanted to eradicate the capitalist system, because he believed that uneven development in competing capitalist countries forced nations to fight wars in order to obtain a more favorable result.

President Harry S. Truman later promulgated what the press immediately coined the "Truman Doctrine", warning the Soviet Union – which actively supported a threatened communist takeover of both Greece and Turkey – that the United States would act to halt the spread of communism wherever in the world it threatened democracy.<sup>26</sup> The quick infusion of capital bolstered the economies of both countries and helped defeat the communist insurgency. The Truman Doctrine would be the backbone of American foreign policy for the next four decades. America would no longer be an isolationist nation. Instead, it would assume a position of global leadership diplomatically, militarily, and economically.<sup>27</sup>

The Truman Doctrine was the embodiment of the strategy proposed by Kennan. The United States would actively oppose the Soviet Union whenever and wherever it sought to expand its ideological influence. Thus began the "Cold War," a phrase that journalist Herbert Bayard Swope used in 1947 to best describe the chronic state of hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> Now the world would see a new type of superpower conflict, one fought by every means possible except military. Robert Lippman creatively uses a sports analogy to describe this new international order. "The international balance of power, once an intricate system of alliances, ententes and state systems, had become part of a global skins-and-shirts game, you either played for the Soviet Union or the United States; it was a very small league."<sup>29</sup> Stalin's Communist governments in Eastern Europe created two Europe's divided by an "Iron Curtain." By implementing the Truman Doctrine, the United States had clearly opted for western unity rather than any further East-West negotiations.

For the next two decades (1960 – 1980) an arms race, surrogate wars, and détente dominated the Bipolar Era's Cold War. Unable to attack each other directly because of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the US and the Soviet Union instead sponsored surrogates who fought in wars all over the globe for power, prestige, and influence. While guerilla wars began spreading out of control, it soon became apparent that diplomacy would be the key to ultimately ending the Cold War. Surprisingly, China would tip the balance of power. While war was raging between Pakistan and India in 1971, then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger

secretly met with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai.<sup>30</sup> As Kissinger explains, the impromptu meeting would prove to be very profitable for the United States:

The policy of détente and the triangular relationship that quickly developed between the United States, China, and the Soviet Union unlocked the door to a series of major breakthroughs; the end of America's war in Vietnam, an agreement that guaranteed access to divided Berlin, a dramatic reduction of Soviet influence in the Middle East, the beginning of the Arab-Israeli peace process, and the European Security Conference.<sup>31</sup>

All of these actions reduced tension in the world and increased stability in the international system.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan, the newly elected President of the United States, forever changed the way America would deal with the Soviet Union. Unhappy with recent communist gains in Latin America and Africa, Reagan scuttled détente and instead pressured the Soviets to end their oppressive expansionist practices. An anxious world nervously awaited the Soviet's response to President Reagan's challenge. It was truly an historic moment when Mikhail Gorbachev, the Communist Party's new leader, repudiated his nation's historic class struggle dogma and announced that the Soviet Union now wanted to peacefully coexist with the democracies in the west. His new initiatives, Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness), exposed the inherent weaknesses in the communist party's dysfunctional economic and political systems. In just one year, the entire Eastern Bloc collapsed. It was a memorable moment when the citizens of Berlin dismantled the notorious Berlin Wall, the very symbol of the Cold War. As far as the West was concerned, the containment policy worked. Not one of the democracies in Western Europe had fallen under communist control.

Kenneth Waltz tells us that the bipolar arrangement was remarkably stable because with only two superpowers there were no peripheries.<sup>32</sup> John Mearshimer believes that the bipolar world was naturally more peaceful because with only two superpowers, the balance of power was much easier to maintain. He also suggests that minor powers had to align themselves with one of the two superpowers in order to guarantee their own survival.<sup>33</sup>

It is important to note that bipolarity realistically reflected the facts of where military power rested after World War II. The simple bipolar system did not require sophisticated diplomats like Bismarck or Metternich to maintain it.<sup>34</sup> Alliances within the bipolar world were clear-cut and well delineated. From time to time, the major powers even tolerated defections from their established coalitions (Cuba, Vietnam, Iran, and Egypt) and these hiccups did not cause major disruptions or shifts. In essence, the bipolar system worked because it represented a realistic balance of power and served the cause of order.

Mutual independence provided the two superpowers with powerful inducements to control the possible escalation of crises resulting from the risk taking of third party surrogates.<sup>35</sup> Thomas Christensen points out that the introduction of nuclear weapons may have even cemented the bipolar arrangement. He further emphasizes that the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction made the bipolar system possible.<sup>36</sup> The United States and Russia created their own spheres of influence. Although there were a series of small regional wars fought during this period, there was nothing that even remotely resembled the two world wars that took place in the first half of the twentieth century. The bipolar world that many diplomats became comfortable with ended suddenly in 1990-1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed.

#### The Unipolar Era 1991-2005

In 1991, the international system became a unipolar constellation featuring just one superpower, the United States. The former Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies had collapsed under the financial strains of the Cold War arms race. In order to rebuild their devastated economic systems, these nations moved quickly to reduce the size of their armed forces. The Cold War victors, no longer needing large armies to counter their communist foes, likewise reduced the size of their armed forces in order to reap the benefits of a “peace dividend”. Every nation on earth drew a collective sigh as the threat of mutually assured destruction, featuring massive nuclear weapons arsenals, had passed. Even failing states took comfort in the fact that the new world order promised to bring peace and prosperity to all.

Historically speaking, America's global reach is unmatched. Perhaps Rome and China were once unipolar powers, but their power was never intercontinental, only regional. Former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski points out that the United States has a multitude of ways to project its power. “Not only does the United States control all of the world's oceans and seas, but it has developed an assertive military capability for amphibious shore control that enables it to project its power inland in politically significant ways.”<sup>37</sup> No country has ever been as dominant as the United States is today. According to William Wohlforth, “The United States is the first leading state in modern international history with decisive preponderance in all the underlying components of power: economic, military, technological, and geopolitical.”<sup>38</sup>

The United States is an unusual hegemonic power. An isolationist country historically, the US was forced to become a global leader following World War II. Due to technological advances in weaponry and communication, the world had become too small and violent for a nation as prominent as the United States to simply go home and stick its head in the sand. So by 1991, with only one superpower remaining on the world stage, the two biggest causes of

cataclysmic world wars, hegemonic rivalry and balance-of-power politics among the major powers, were eliminated.<sup>39</sup> As far as the international system was concerned, change, although greatly anticipated and welcomed, would not come easily. The United States would never get the chance to collect its peace dividend.

Right from the start, the unpredictable, anarchic international system presented the world's only superpower with many interesting and challenging scenarios. This forced the State Department to develop and advocate many different foreign policy strategies. Charles Maynes explains that in a democracy, public opinion plays an integral role in foreign policy formulation:

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has announced sequentially a number of "strategies": the development of a new world order, assertive multilateralism, the enlargement of the zone of democracy and free markets, the establishment of more predictable and fruitful relations among the major powers, and now humanitarian intervention to prevent ethnic wars. The paradox challenging every administration is that they must establish a global role in the post-Cold War world that the American people are comfortable with while at the same time acknowledging that the electorate does not want to pay the price in dollars or blood of establishing a new world order or pressing the norms of democracy into countries they scarcely know exist.<sup>40</sup>

In the beginning of the unipolar era, regime change occurred somewhere in the world almost daily. Not only did the entire Eastern Bloc quickly unravel, but in Panama and Nicaragua, democratic governments collapsed as well. In August 1990, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait and the illusion of a new era of peace and enlightenment disappeared. Almost immediately, President George H. W. Bush remarked, "Out of these troubled times ... a new world order can emerge: a new era -- freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world ... can prosper and live in harmony."<sup>41</sup> In its first post-Cold War test, the United States quickly mobilized a coalition of nations determined to make sure that Saddam would obey the United Nation's Security Council and withdraw his forces from Kuwait. When he refused to comply, the coalition attacked (Operation Desert Storm) and forcibly removed Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

The US appeared to be thriving in its new role as the world's policeman. The next major international crisis would prove to be more difficult. Somalia, an incredibly poor nation on Africa's eastern coast, was imploding. Ravaged by a long drought, famine, and anarchy, thousands of Somali children were dying every day. Without a huge humanitarian relief effort, these innocent victims would continue to die. Many nations questioned whether the United States truly was the benevolent world leader it claimed to be. They argued that the only reason the US forced the Iraqis out of Kuwait was that a vital national interest (the free flow of oil in the Middle East) was threatened. Because there were no vital interests at stake in Somalia, it

appeared that the US would not act despite the fact that it was the only nation on earth capable of doing so. The United States eventually did lead a United Nation's sponsored Humanitarian Relief effort in Somalia (Operation Restore Hope). After some initial successes, indigenous Somali forces rebelled and killed many American soldiers. The US government quickly withdrew its forces. In comparison to Operation Desert Storm, Operation Restore Hope, albeit an honorable undertaking, was a foreign policy disaster. Because of this debacle, many leaders stated that the US should never again take part in a mission when one of its vital interests was not threatened.

Even though this may be a state-level issue: when, where, and how the world's only superpower chooses to act, within the confines of the international system it dominates, will always have a major impact on system permanence and stability. In democratic nation-states, foreign policy objectives can change dramatically when new leaders and their administrations assume office. In the 2000 US Presidential election, Republican George W. Bush defeated Clinton's Vice President Al Gore. Bush, a conservative, declared he was against using the military in so many nation-building ventures. He wanted the military to concentrate on its more traditional warfighting mission instead.<sup>42</sup>

On September 11, 2001, before President Bush had the chance to implement any major changes, nineteen Al-Qaeda terrorists launched a series of simultaneous attacks in New York, Washington D.C., and western Pennsylvania that rocked the foundations of the international system. The President quickly responded by promising to hold Al-Qaeda and any government who supported them responsible. The Administration forthrightly developed and implemented a new foreign policy strategy, immediately coined the "Bush Doctrine", which eliminated any confusion regarding how the US now planned to prosecute its affairs in the international arena.

The Bush Doctrine quickly incorporated many new strategic initiatives, that when taken together, marked a major shift in US foreign policy. There are four salient elements in the new doctrine. First, the US will take pre-emptive military action, if necessary, to ensure its self-defense. Next, the US retains the right to pursue unilateral military action whenever a multilateral solution is not feasible or suitable. Third, the United States intends to build and maintain a military whose strength is beyond challenge. Lastly, the US will actively promote policies extending democracy and freedom to all corners of the globe. The Bush Doctrine advocates deliberate and proactive unilateral actions and this is a general departure from the long-standing, reactive policies of deterrence (mutually assured destruction) and flexible response.<sup>43</sup> Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would pose new challenges for the world's last superpower.

#### Four Foreign Policy Strategies for the United States

As the United States and its “Coalition of the Willing” continue to fight the Global War on Terror, the nation’s leadership must decide how it will manage the international system it now dominates. Charles Krauthammer suggests that in its role as the world’s unipolar power, the United States has four distinct foreign policy (grand) strategies it can implement. These options are isolationism, liberal internationalism, realism, and democratic globalism.<sup>44</sup> Along with analyzing the four different options Krauthammer proposes, this study will further examine which nation-states, international organizations, or transnational groups are most likely to emerge and challenge US primacy on the world stage.

Isolationism is the oldest, and well into the twentieth century, the most traditional form of American foreign policy strategy. Historically, the United States relied upon two large oceans to protect its shores from foreign invasion. Revolutionary technological advances in transportation and weaponry forced the US to adopt different strategies. Until the end of the Second World War, after its forays abroad, America’s first inclination was to consolidate its gains and retreat behind its borders. Today, it is no longer suitable or feasible for the United States to prosecute its foreign affairs in such a manner. Globalization and economic integration now connect countries in such a manner that isolationism, in its purist form, is no longer a practical alternative.

According to Krauthammer, “Isolationism originally sprang from a view of America as spiritually superior to the Old World. We were too good to be corrupted by its low intrigues, entangled by its cynical alliances.”<sup>45</sup> In modern times, isolationism has taken a different form. It is now an ideology of fear; fear of immigration, trade, military commitments, alliances, or put more succinctly, a fear of anything that is un-American.<sup>46</sup> Isolationists want to build a wall around America and attempt to prosper in the future, all by themselves. Isolationism may still possess some utility as an historical international relations theory, but in the modern world, it is no longer a real consideration.

If, for whatever reason, the United States did choose to retreat back into an isolationist shell, it would create a chaotic situation and thrust the current unipolar international system into immediate disorder. What would surely follow is an unprecedented rush to fill the power vacuum and the world we know today might quickly become a dangerous, hotly contested multipolar constellation. A European Union led by Britain, Germany, or Russia, along with China, India or Japan could all move quickly to supplant US hegemony, although a return to isolationism is highly unlikely.

The next school of thought is liberal internationalism, an approach favored most recently by former President Bill Clinton. Krauthammer explains that, "Liberal internationalism is the foreign policy of the Democratic Party and the foreign policy elite. It traces its pedigree to Woodrow Wilson's utopianism, Harry Truman's anticommunism, and John Kennedy's militant universalism."<sup>47</sup> Liberal internationalists believe in the positive power of multilateralism. They continually look for international approval concerning national security questions. They believe that international and non-governmental agencies are inherently good and are usually opposed to any US unilateral activities.

During the Cold War, liberal internationalists generally favored peaceful, passive solutions, not threatening, aggressive action. They favored disarmament, not an arms race. They even voted overwhelmingly not to go to war in 1991 over Kuwait, instead advocating sanctions as a solution. Surprisingly, in the 1990s, they supported US intervention in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. However, these humanitarian relief efforts appealed to their utopian beliefs, not US national interests, and therefore, accordingly, were appropriate uses of military force.<sup>48</sup>

If the liberal internationalists have their way, then the unipolar world that we now live in will soon end. Liberal internationalists worship at the altar of multilateralism, even to the point of subjugating US national interests to international legitimacy. They constantly desire universal foreign blessing, usually in the form of United Nations support, and are prepared to give up US sovereignty and power to obtain it. While their ends are certainly laudable, liberal internationalists must remember that the international system is anarchic, and does not reward its members for good behavior.

Krauthammer believes that multilateralism is "a way for weak countries to multiply their power by attaching themselves to stronger ones. But, multilateralism imposed on Great Powers, and particularly on a unipolar power, is intended to restrain power."<sup>49</sup> This explains why so many regional powers do not support the US in its unilateral actions on the Global War on Terror. France, China, Russia, Japan, and every other minor power in the world except Great Britain is opposed to the pre-emptive action the US took in Iraq.

The quickest way these former major powers can change the current unipolar world order is to use international organizations to legislatively and administratively weaken the United States' position to the point that it would no longer be a superpower but just another major power. In Krauthammer's opinion "to create such a true international community, you have to temper, transcend, and, in the end, abolish the very idea of state power and national interest."<sup>50</sup> Therefore, liberal internationalists believe that in order to create an international community, US

dominance must end. If it does, it will not be surprising if a new multipolar world emerges, not the idealistic world government these ideologues crave. Again, minor powers like Britain, Germany, Russia, China, and Japan could all move quickly to increase their relative power. The very idea that nation-states would truly subjugate their national interests for the common good is not only foolish, but also unprecedented. Fortunately, it is unlikely that America's governmental leaders would ever accept this utopian world construct.

According to Ole Holsti, Krauthammer's final foreign policy option, "classical realism is the most venerable and persistent model of international relations, it provides a good starting point and baseline for comparison with competing models."<sup>51</sup> It is also Holsti's belief that Realism emphasizes the conflictual nature of global politics, the priority of national security, a pessimistic view of human nature, and a consequentialist moral perspective.<sup>52</sup> Many famous political theorists like Thucydides, Hobbes, and Machiavelli embraced realism. In contemporary times, important figures like Hans J. Morgenthau, George F. Kennan Jr., and Henry Kissinger continued to espouse the realist mantra.

Realism assumes that power is (or ought to be) the primary end of political action, whether in the domestic or international arena. Therefore, nation-states should continually strive to maximize their power. The changes in the international environment following last century's second cataclysmic conflict forced US decision-makers to focus upon the changes made in the underlying philosophy upon which American foreign policy, national security, and diplomacy rested.<sup>53</sup> The Truman Administration applied many of the tenets of realism in their policy decisions. Terms and concepts such as the national interest and balance of power replaced the humanitarian and moralistic beliefs that energized the idealistic architects of the nation's pre-World War II foreign policy.

Truman and his advisors operated under a set system of beliefs about the realist nature of the international system and a new bipolar constellation. Ronald Stupak and Charles Leitner argue that after World War II, America's leaders viewed the world from a very realistic perspective:

It was the philosophical assumptions of realism as enunciated by George Kennan, Dean Acheson, and Harry Truman that set the tangible, but nonetheless understandable, parameters within which American policymakers viewed the world – and ultimately, set the framework within which operational policies were planned and pursued.<sup>54</sup>

The national interest, as understood by Morgenthau and his followers, is not just the starting point of a state's foreign policy but it is the result as well. A country's national interest can only be defined in terms of power, and a nation should use all of its available elements of power –

military, diplomatic, economic, ideological, traditional, moral, technical, and geographical – to achieve its goals.<sup>55</sup>

Realists believe that the concept of an international community is nothing more than fiction, while the international system, and our role in it, is what truly matters. Realism encompasses all policies including preemption, mutually assured destruction, deterrence, and even paradoxically, liberalism. The important thing is that the policy you choose to follow increases your relative power. Realism allows you to act unilaterally or multilaterally, in fact building coalitions can be a very good thing, as long as you benefit from the association. Krauthammer warns that realism alone is not the answer. "But here we come up against the limits of realism. You cannot live by power alone. Realism is a valuable antidote to the wooly internationalism of the 1990s. But realism can only take you so far."<sup>56</sup>

Krauthammer believes that the basic problem with realism is that power, and power alone, is what drives nations to do the things they do. "Morganthau postulated that what drives nations, what motivates their foreign policy, is the will to power – to keep it and expand it."<sup>57</sup> Pure realism has no heart, and because of that, the American public will never embrace it. Americans want to be strong and secure, but they also like to think they are helping others who are less fortunate along the way.

If realists have their way, anything is possible. The world could return to the Realpolitik tradition of the late nineteenth century, where all that mattered was increasing a nation's relative power. If the US and its citizens are willing to pay the price militarily and economically, the current unipolar world could continue for some time. Unfortunately, this would be a very turbulent time because the US would have to deal with any potential contenders to the throne (peer competitors) swiftly and decisively. Much like the time leading up to World War I, coalitions and regional blocs could form to contest American supremacy. If one of these entities could consolidate its power quickly enough, a new bipolar world could emerge. Potentially, China, a pan-Arab coalition, or a unified European Union (EU) could become this new superpower. Otherwise, a multipolar world, with many powers, is possible. Potentially, these powers include the European Union, Britain, Germany, Russia, China, and Japan.

The last of Krauthammer's four policy prescriptions is democratic globalism. While one could argue that the Clinton administration favored a liberal internationalist agenda as its worldview, likewise, the Bush White House seems to favor the democratic globalist perspective. Krauthammer explains that this foreign policy perspective "defines the national interest not as power but as values, and identifies one supreme value, what John Kennedy called, 'the success

of liberty'.”<sup>58</sup> This is an entirely new concept. Our value system, not our relative power, is what should define us as a nation, and hence, become our true national interest.

Democratic globalists believe that, as a rule, democracies do not fight wars against each other. They do acknowledge that during the last century democracies may have participated in wars, but usually against totalitarian regimes or dictatorships. There are many reasons why democracies choose to compromise with each other and refrain from fighting. Democratic nation-states normally have constitutions that establish governmental systems with inherent checks and balances (executive, legislative, and judicial components) designed to protect the fundamental human rights of their citizens and limit individual authority. Most also advocate the promotion of free trade and economic development. Simply stated, individual and economic freedoms are the driving principles, not war and power.

Krauthammer argues that what makes this option so attractive is that “it is not just an end but a means, an indispensable means for securing American interests. The reason is simple. Democracies are more friendly to the United States, less belligerent to their neighbors, and generally more inclined to peace.”<sup>59</sup> In his 2002 National Security Strategy, President Bush specifically states that the United States wants to “create a balance of power that favors human freedom, conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.”<sup>60</sup>

Critics believe this is nothing more than a religious crusade by conservatives attempting to create a world in their own image. However, it is hard to dispute the logic of values over power. Naturally, not all nations share common values. Many oppressive, closed societies argue that their ancient and respected traditions are more important to them than some liberal, western-based, equal rights agenda. In his seminal work, *The Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel Huntington predicted that civilizations would clash over such issues:

Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures. Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction against ‘human rights imperialism’ and a reaffirmation of indigenous values, as can be seen in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures.<sup>61</sup>

One thing is clear; not everyone desires the American dream. Brzezinski also warns that forcing others to adopt democratic systems could backfire. “The promotion of democracy; if pursued with a fanatical zeal that ignores the historical and cultural traditions of Islam similarly could produce democracy’s very negation.”<sup>62</sup>

Nation building is very difficult, and as we have witnessed in Iraq, not always warmly received. In all likelihood, a democratic globalist foreign policy agenda will not create a new balance of power in the international system. Instead, the unipolar moment will continue for quite some time. Logically speaking, creating mirror nations with similar values, ideals, and morals is an ingenious way to promulgate and strengthen the status quo. This appears to be the government's underlying strategy.

So how should the United States proceed in prosecuting its foreign policy? Due to technological advances in communication and transportation systems, isolationism is no longer possible. Fortress America disappeared fifteen to twenty years ago. The dream world that liberal internationalists keep trying to build will never come to fruition, because nation-states will always put their individual interests ahead of the common good, unless of course, they are compatible. Realism, in its purist form, will never work because it is power consolidation without conscience. The American people will never support power hoarding without a higher purpose. Democratic globalism, the final option, is not succeeding as planned because other countries want their own identity, values, and traditions, not ours. As Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann points out, "To some people, trying to protect their own societies, religions and cultures from the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, the global norms that human rights activists propose seem suspiciously like 'Western' norms."<sup>63</sup>

Democratic globalists will eventually come to the realization that one size does not fit all. Krauthammer concludes that a hybrid option, democratic realism is the solution. Under this prescription "we (America) will support democracy everywhere, but we will commit blood and treasure only in places where there is a strategic necessity—meaning, places central to a larger war against the existential enemy, the enemy that poses a global mortal threat to freedom."<sup>64</sup> While America's friends will applaud these noble efforts, critics will surely object to the selective nature of the morale agenda. On the surface, this appears to be little more than a realism-tinted, modern-day crusade, but this is the position many leading conservatives now advocate.

#### The Global Realism Approach

A more utilitarian approach to this problem is another hybrid policy prescription, global realism. A true global realist intuitively understands that vital national interests must drive a nation's critical foreign policy decisions. However, due to the effects of globalization, one must employ different strategies to manage the new world order effectively. Spreading peace and prosperity, not democracy and prosperity, should be the objective. It is presumptuous to assume that every nation on earth wants to be a democracy. There are people in the world that

would rather be citizens of a kingdom, an emirate, or a religious state. Their current leadership may rule because of an important custom or tradition inherent to their society. Their lifestyle probably helped them form their core values. A global realist recognizes that these entities can still be productive, healthy nation-states in the contemporary unipolar international system constellation, as long as their interests and the United States' are compatible. Consequently, in regards to governmental systems, global realism is inclusive, while global democracy is not.

Globalization is the process where goods, services, capital, people, information, and ideas flow across borders and lead to greater economic and societal integration.<sup>65</sup> Globalization is not a new phenomenon; international trade has been around for more than a hundred years. However, over the past twenty years, quantum leaps in computer technology and communications systems have made the world a much smaller place. Today, everything happens more quickly and efficiently. Ellen Frost believes that it is not possible to contain globalization. "No government can stop it, but an important goal of US foreign and defense policy should be to help channel it in benign directions."<sup>66</sup> The ultimate strategic challenge for the United States is to manage an international system in which every country feels that they can be prosperous and safe. If a nation believes that cooperating with the United States is their best option, then they will be more inclined to do so. According to Frost, "The United States should avoid policies that polarize the global community, concentrating instead on promoting global norms that are accompanied by global systems, institutions, and rules."<sup>67</sup> Former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski believes that the United States needs to develop and implement a new foreign policy strategy:

In brief, the US policy goal must be unapologetically twofold: to perpetuate America's own dominant position for at least a generation and preferably longer still; and to create a geopolitical framework that can absorb the shocks and strains of socio-political change while evolving into the geopolitical core of shared responsibility for peaceful global management.<sup>68</sup>

The global realist perspective provides political theorists with the purpose (peace and prosperity) that classical realism failed to provide. If the world remains relatively peaceful and prosperous, then the unipolar moment should continue. At worst, a stable multipolar system might replace it. Both of these scenarios would be better than a return to a contentious, unstable bipolar arrangement, where both sides have a nuclear arsenal at their disposal.

### The Next World Order

This brings us back to our original question: what will the next world order look like? Today, America is dominant in every measurable element of national power: diplomatic,

economic, and military. Although America's power and influence are unprecedented and incontrovertible, the American unipolar moment will not last forever. Charles Freeman believes that the international system will continue to change, despite of any nations attempts to keep it from doing so:

No international order is everlasting. No state is eternally strong or forever weak. The decline of strong states, the rise of weak ones, or the rearrangement of relations between former allies and enemies can throw the international order into a kaleidoscopic change, fundamentally altering the environment in which both grand and diplomatic strategy must operate.<sup>69</sup>

Historically speaking, the international system can be highly volatile when the balance of power is in a state of flux.

Now more than ever, it is crucial that the United States assumes a leadership role in shaping the next world order. We know that there will always be challenges to American primacy. Zbigniew Brzezinski does not believe that the EU is ready to challenge the United States for world primacy. "Europe might be competitive economically, but it will be a long time before Europe acquires the degree of unity that would enable it to compete politically."<sup>70</sup> Not one of the oil rich Middle Eastern countries has developed the technology required to build a simple automobile, let alone a modern industrialized society. Additionally, they appear to be unable to form lasting coalitions, which would enable them to consolidate their power and be competitive on the world stage. It is Brzezinski's contention that the United States has no peer rival in Asia either. "Japan, once seen as the next superstate, is out of the race, while China, despite its economic progress, is likely to remain relatively poor for at least two generations and in the meantime may suffer some severe political difficulties. Russia is no longer in the running."<sup>71</sup> Barring any unforeseen miracles, natural or man-made, America will not have a global peer anytime soon.

Even so, it is possible that a bipolar world could reemerge, this time with China as the United States' rival. Another scenario involves a politically unified European Union. If Europe were to become a single, unified nation, the world would immediately become bipolar.<sup>72</sup> The EU achieved economic integration very quickly, but political integration will probably not occur for at least a couple of decades, if ever. Therefore, it is very unlikely that the world will return to a bipolar balance of power.

The current unipolar system may be around for some time because the US is a hegemon that desires peace, not conflict. Brzezinski argues that American global primacy is unique. "It is a hegemony of a new type that reflects many of the features of the American democratic system: it is pluralistic, permeable, and flexible."<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately, the international system is

anarchic by design and it is only logical that in a globally integrated world, American primacy and resolve will diminish over time while the relative power of other nations will increase. For this reason, the unipolar moment will eventually end.

Samuel Huntington tells us that, "Virtually all of the major regional powers are increasingly asserting themselves to promote their own distinct interests, which often conflict with the United States."<sup>74</sup> When the gap between the US and the rest of the world narrows, a multipolar balance of power will return. Charles Clover believes that, "The concept of a new multipolar world is based on an obscure theory of international relations, which posits that a world with many diverse power centers will automatically oppose a hegemon, in this case the United States."<sup>75</sup> It would in essence be a return to the "Old World Order," with stability based on alliances instead of multilateral institutions. The important thing is for the United States to use its influence to ensure that only peaceful and prosperous nations attain major power status. Then, global realism will have triumphed. The new polar powers would be the United States and more than likely, some combination of the following countries: France, Germany, Britain, Japan, China or Russia.

In this paper, I analyzed and chronicled the evolution of the international system for more than 200 years. This study also examined the dynamics and permanence of all three international polar systems and identified, discussed, and measured the strengths and weaknesses of four distinct foreign policy (grand) strategies that Charles Krauthammer suggested the US could implement in the current unipolar environment. Instead of implementing one of those strategies, it may be more prudent for the US to consider adopting a hybrid solution, global realism. Additionally, an analysis of which nation-states and international organizations are likely to emerge and challenge US primacy on the world stage, indicated that a multipolar world, albeit a peaceful and prosperous one still dominated by the United States, will eventually replace today's unipolar world.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>10</sup> Kissinger, 79.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Fogel, *The Crimean War and the Death of the Concert of Europe*; available from <http://www.pvhs.chicok12.ca.us/~bsilva/projects/concert/fogelcon.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 November 2005.

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<sup>13</sup> According to Kissinger, “Realpolitik” is the formulation of foreign policy based on calculations of power and national interest. See Kissinger, 137.

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, “Perceptions and Alliances in Europe 1865-1940,” *International Organization* 51 (Winter 1997): 67.

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